

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IN
SUBJECT: BREZHNEV VISIT: DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPACT

REF: NEW DELHI 14010

SUMMARY: BREZHNEV VISIT STRENGTHENED PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION WITHIN RULING CONGRESS AND VIS-A-VIS OPPOSITION, HIS PRAISE FOR PRIME MINISTER'S AND CONGRESS' COMMITMENT TO SOCIALISM AND CALL FOR CLOSER CONGRESS-CPSU TIES UNDERMINED EFFORTS BY PRO-MOSCOW COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (CPI) TO RETAIN SEPARATE, MILITANT IMAGE. PREDICABLE CARPING BY OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES MADE LITTLE IMPACT. END SUMMARY.

1. BREZHNEV VISIT TOOK PLACE AGAINST DOMESTIC BACKDROP FEATURING REASSERTION OF INITIATIVE BY PRIME MINISTER AFTER SUMMER DOLDRUMS DURING WHICH MRS. GANDHI HAD MADE IT CLEAR THE BREZHNEV VISIT WAS NOT THEN TIMELY. CPI HAD ATTEMPTED THROUGH AGITATIONS AND STRIKES TO DISTANCE ITSELF FROM CONGRESS PARTY

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SEEMINGLY UNABLE TO CONTROL PRICES, OVERCOME SCARCITIES, OR

CONTAIN CORRUPTION. TO SHORE UP HER POSITION, PRIME MINISTER HAD BEGUN OVERTURES TOWARD OPPOSITION OLD CONGRESS FIGURES AND TOWARD LARGE BUSINESS HOUSES. CPI CRITICISM OF CONGRESS DOMESTIC POLICIES TOOK FORM OF AGITATIONS AND STRIKES, EARNING IT BOTH INDIRECT AND DIRECT REBUKES FROM PRIME MINISTER.

2. BREZHNEV'S REPEATED PUBLIC PRAISE FOR PRIME MINISTER GANDHI AND FOR CONGRESS PARTY'S PROGRAM "OF BROAD SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION DESIGNED TO IMPROVE LIFE OF THE PEOPLE" ACTED AS A TONIC FOR BOTH. NOW THAT SHE HAS ONCE AGAIN RECEIVED BREZHNEV'S BLESSINGS, CONGRESS LEFTISTS MAY FIND IT MORE DIFFICULT TO CRITICIZE PRIME MINISTER OR HER POLICIES.

3. CONGRESS AND CPI BOTH MOUNTED MASSIVE PROPAGANDA AND POPULAR CAMPAIGN TO WELCOME BREZHNEV, BUT HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND REPORTED PRIVATE ADMONITIONS APPEAR TO HAVE PLEASED FORMER MORE THAN LATTER. IN WIDELY PUBLICIZED TOW-HOUR CONVERSATION WITH CONGRESS PRESIDENT SHARMA, BREZHNEV ADVOCATED CLOSER TIES BETWEEN CONGRESS AND CPSU, TO DISCOMFITURE OF RIGHTIST/CENTRISTS WITHIN CONGRESS AND OF CPI. IN PRIVATE MEETING WITH CPI CHAIRMAN S.A. DANGE AND GENERAL SECRETARY C. RAJESHWAR RAO, BREZHNEV IS RELIABLY REPORTED TO HAVE ADMONISHED THEM TO EXTEND FULL COOPERATION AND SUPPORT TO PRIME MINISTER AND TO STOP AGITATIONS AND STRIKES WHICH UNDERMINE MRS. GANDHI'S POSITION AND IMPEDE PRODUCTION. CPI EMBARRASSMENT AT BREZHNEV PRAISE FOR CONGRESS PARTY REFLECTED IN CAREFUL EXCISION OF BREZHNEV'S REFERENCE TO CONGRESS FROM REPORTING ON VISIT IN CIP WEEKLY NEW AGE DEC. 2. BREZHNEV'S LENGTHY EXPOSITION OF THE BENEFITS OF DENTENTE AND FAILURE TO CRITICIZE EITHER USA OR PRC BY NAME MAY ALSO SOMEWHAT MUTE CPI EFFORTS TO WHIP UP ANTI-AMERICAN FERVOR ALTHOUGH EDITORIALS IN PRO-CIP "PATRIOT" SHOW LITTLE SIGN OF THIS THUS FAR.

4. RIGHT OPPOSITION PARTIES PREDICABLY CRITICIZED PRIME MINISTER, CONGRESS AND CPI FOR EXPLOITING BREZHNEV VISIT FOR "NARROW PARTY ENDS". THEY ALSO QUESTIONED WHETHER LINKING OF SOVIET AND INDIAN PLANNING AND INCREASED SOVIET ASSISTANCE FURTHER PROCLAIMED ROLE OF "SELF-RELIANCE". CPI-M WELCOMED STRENGTHENED BILATERAL TIES BY DEPLORED BREZHNEV'S PRAISE OF "BOURGEOIS-LANDLORE"-DOMINATED CONGRESS REGIME. BREZHNEV PARTIALLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEFUSED CRITICISM THAT CONGRESS HAD COMPLETELY BOTTLED UP BREZHNEV AND KEPT HIM FROM OPPOSITION SPOKESMEN BY AGREEING TO LAST-MINUTE MEETING WITH SOCIALIST PARLIAMENTARIAN MADHU LIMAYZNO WHO REPORTEDLY TOLD BREZHNEV HE WAS UNDER NO COMPULSION TO COMMEND CONGRESS PERFORMANCE ON DOMESHD SIYOE.

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